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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 000375

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SECURITY IN KIDAL

REF: A. BAMAKO 00366
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00374

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: Tuareg rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi met with the Ambassador on April 16 to discuss the security situation in Kidal. Ag Bibi said Tuaregs are convinced that the two ADC members executed on April 10-11 (Ref A) were killed by ill-trained members of the Malian military. While some members of the ADC apparently advocated for an alliance with Ibrahim Bahanga following the killings, ag Bibi said he convinced the ADC to remain independent of Bahanga. The situation in Kidal appears to have stabilized for the moment although ADC, which left Kidal en masse with a large portion of the civilian population on April 12, has yet to return to Kidal. On April 17 the French Ambassador described President Toure as "upbeat" and confident that the crisis was under control. End Summary.

Ag Bibi Blames Military, Calls for Inquiry

2.(C) ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi returned to Bamako from two months in Kidal on April 15. Ag Bibi has placed himself as the leader of the ADC during the prolonged absence of ADC president, Iyad ag Ghali, who is believed to still be in Tripoli. Ag Bibi said there was no doubt amongst Malian Tuaregs that the two individuals executed on April 10-11 were killed by alian soldiers. He did, however, say that he dobted the guilty parties were acting on orders fromabove. The ADC, which left Kidal en masse on Aprl 12 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mousa Bah, is demanding a credible murder inquiry, a camp in Kidal that is not associated with the Malian military base and a return to the Algiers Accords process. The ADC was expected to return to Kidal during the weekend of April 19-20 after local government officials granted permission for the ADC to set up its own camp on the outskirts of town. However, the ADC is demanding an official statement to this effect from the Malian government and therefore remains in the mountains of Tegharghar.

3.(C) Ag Bibi said the ADC refused overtures from Ibrahim Bahanga to join forces following the executions, reporting that Bahanga telephoned him after the executions to propose an alliance against the government. It appears that some members of the ADC were interested in joining Bahanga, and while ag Bibi's hold over the entire ADC is not as strong as that of Iyad ag Ghali's, he claims to have convinced ADC fighters not to align with Bahanga and advised Bahanga not to

attack any more military convoys. Bahanga may have heeded his advice, as a re-supply convoy reached Tinzawaten on April 18 without incident.

4.(C) Given the depth of the crisis in Kidal, Ag Bibi appeared remarkably jovial, but said he was growing tired of empty agreements and proposals. "I was in Kidal for two months," he said, "for meetings, meetings and meetings with no solutions." Claiming that neither Libya nor Algeria were reliable partners, Ag Bibi encouraged the U.S. to assume a larger role. He said President Toure was faced with only bad options and that Tuaregs were unable to find a solution on their own. He asked the U.S. to issue a statement condemning the executions and calling on the Malian government to conduct a credible murder inquiry that included the ADC.

5.(C) He also seemed disappointed by the performance of the Malian military, seeming to bemoan the lack of a skilled opponent for Tuareg rebels. Bamba Keita, the commander of the military convoy that was attacked by Bahanga on March 20, actually telephoned ag Bibi during the fire-fight to ask if he could call Bahanga and ask him to stop shooting. Ag Bibi reminded Keita that the ADC had advised him not to go forward and that Keita had asked his soldiers to vote on whether the convoy should stop or go forward. "They voted to advance," said ag Bibi, "and then 5 kilometers later - pow! That's not an army."

6.(C) Ag Bibi said war was part of Tuareg culture, encoded in the Tuareg DNA, and questioned whether President Toure was fully in command of his armed forces. He said the army was running out of money and that officers were openly embezzling funds, but that President Toure had to keep the spigot open

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in order to maintain the army's loyalty. Ag Bibi speculated that former military dictator Moussa Traore and opposition politicians were reveling in President Toure's inability to manage Tuareg threats in the north, rising commodity prices in the south and an education crisis throughout the country.

7.(C) The Ambassador said to ag Bibi that an inquiry was clearly needed and observed that Algeria was well placed, both historically and politically, to mediate between the Tuaregs and the Malian government. He also expressed hope that the ADC would continue to support the Accords process in order to avoid an explosion of violence in the north.

Tuaregs Send Commission From Bamako

8.(C) A delegation of eight Kidal Tuaregs met with President Toure on April 14 and departed for Kidal on April 18 to spend one month meeting with local officials, the ADC and Bahanga. This commission was organized by Tuaregs themselves and will not serve as a representative of the Malian government. During his meeting with the group, President Toure offered his condolences for the murdered Tuaregs in Kidal, expressed exasperation with Algeria and said he turned to Libya simply to secure the release of the 33 hostages still held by Bahanga. Ag Bibi advised this group (which includes former Minister Mohamed ag Erlaf, the Malian diplomat Abdurahmane Ghalla, presidential advisor Acherif ag Mohamed and National Assembly Deputy Mohamed ag Intallah among others) not to travel to Kidal because "they have nothing to offer." He said the group should instead wait to see what Minister of Foreign Affairs Moctar Ouane brings back from his trip to Algiers. After conferring with ag Bibi on April 16, the group decided to head to Kidal anyway. Ouane, who was to have traveled to Algiers early last week, instead apparently departed Bamako for Algeria only over the weekend, having been told that Algiers could not receive him sooner.

French Ambassador

9.(S) Following the Ambassador's April 16 meeting with the French Ambassador suggesting common pressure on President Toure to take a more public, decisive leadership role towards recent developments in the north, the French Ambassador reported that he had reached out to President Toure and Territorial Administration Minister General Kafougouna Kone regarding our common concerns. He described the President as "upbeat and confident" and said the Malian leader had assured him that the situation would return to normal very soon and that the Malian authorities had everything under control. Although President Toure confirmed that Foreign Minister Ouane's mission to Algiers had been delayed until April 19, President Toure seemed confident that the Algerians would soon resume their role as facilitators of the Algiers Accords. Moreover, Toure also felt that the ADC - which had decamped from Kidal following the killings of two Tuaregs last week - would return to the city. He said an inquest was proceeding on the murders, and underlined the army had nothing to do with the incident. According to the French Ambassador, Malian authorities believe the murders took place outside of Kidal, and the bodies were dumped next to the military garrison to implicate the army. President Toure planned a major address to the nation "soon," but wished to delay until he could present the results of Foreign Minister Ouane's mission to Algeria. Bottom line, according the French Ambassador: all is well and President Toure is serene.

Comment: Calm After the Storm?

10.(S) Comment: The situation in Kidal seems to have stabilized, at least for the moment. It is good news that the inquest is proceeding and that the President intends to address the nation on the north; on the other hand optimism regarding the rebellion may be misplaced, as reporting via sensitive channels suggests the ADC may yet be planning to join Bahanga in rebellion. There is little indication of any progress toward meeting Tuareg rebels' central demands of a military draw down to pre-2006 levels in the north, the creation of mixed military units and the distribution of "economic reinsertion" funds to former rebel combatants. President Toure has neither the resources to buy off the

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Tuaregs, the political will to meet Tuareg demands, nor the capacity to enforce a military solution - something the Tuareg know full well. This perhaps explains Ag Bibi's rather upbeat demeanor in spite of the crisis in Kidal and the prolonged absence of the real ADC president, Iyad ag Ghali, who apparently remains in Tripoli. Ag Bibi expected to meet President Toure and General Kone on April 16. As of April 18, he had met neither, as President Toure is in Ghana and General Kone remains "unavailable." The lack of trust between the Algerians and Malians, coupled with Libyan meddling and the funds they provided to Bahanga for the last tranche of hostages, may also play to the Tuaregs' advantage.

Pressure and resources from other international partners - such as the U.S., Canada and the EU - may give President Toure the ability to make some face-saving concessions such as a reduction of force in Tinzawaten and the creation of mixed military units. Up to this point, however, President Toure has requested only non-lethal military support from the U.S. (Ref B), seems resigned to balancing Algerian and Libyan mediation efforts, and has appeared indifferent to alternate courses of action suggested by other concerned parties.

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